



Ticket agents sell tickets, assign seats to passengers, and check baggage.

station agents, work in airport terminals assisting passengers boarding airplanes. These workers direct passengers to the correct boarding area, check tickets and seat assignments, make boarding announcements, and provide special assistance to young, elderly, or disabled passengers when they board or disembark.

Most *travel clerks* are employed by membership organizations, such as automobile clubs. These workers, sometimes called *member services counselors* or *travel counselors*, plan trips, calculate mileage, and offer travel suggestions, such as the best route from the point of origin to the destination, for club members. Travel clerks also may prepare an itinerary indicating points of interest, restaurants, overnight accommodations, and availability of emergency services during the trip. In some cases, they make rental car, hotel, and restaurant reservations for club members.

Passenger rate clerks generally work for bus companies. They sell tickets for regular bus routes and arrange nonscheduled or chartered trips. They plan travel routes, compute rates, and keep customers informed of appropriate details. They also may arrange travel accommodations.

Employment

Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks held about 191,000 jobs in 2000. More than 6 of every 10 are employed by airlines. Others work for membership organizations, such as automobile clubs; hotels and other lodging places; railroad companies; bus lines; and other companies that provide transportation services.

Although agents and clerks are found throughout the country, most work in large metropolitan airports, downtown ticket offices, large reservation centers, and train or bus stations. The remainder work in small communities served only by intercity bus or railroad lines.

Job Outlook

Applicants for reservation and transportation ticket agent jobs are likely to encounter considerable competition, because the supply of qualified applicants exceeds the expected number of job openings. Entry requirements for these jobs are minimal, and many people seeking to get into the airline industry or travel business often start out in these types of positions. These jobs provide excellent travel benefits, and many people view airline and other travel-related jobs as glamorous.

Employment of reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all

occupations through 2010. Although a growing population will demand additional travel services, employment of these workers will grow more slowly than this demand, because of the significant impact of technology on productivity. Automated reservations and ticketing, as well as “ticketless” travel, for example, are reducing the need for some workers. Most train stations and airports now have satellite ticket printer locations, or “kiosks,” that enable passengers to make reservations and purchase tickets themselves. Many passengers also are able to check flight times and fares, make reservations, and purchase tickets on the Internet. Nevertheless, all travel-related passenger services can never be fully automated, primarily for safety and security reasons. As a result, job openings will continue to become available as the occupation grows and as workers transfer to other occupations, retire, or leave the labor force altogether.

Employment of reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks is sensitive to cyclical swings in the economy. During recessions, discretionary passenger travel declines, and transportation service companies are less likely to hire new workers and even may resort to layoffs.

Sources of Additional Information

For information about job opportunities as reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks, write the personnel manager of individual transportation companies. Addresses of airlines are available from:

► Air Transport Association of America, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20004-1707.

(See the introductory statement on information and record clerks for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)

Material Recording, Scheduling, Dispatching, and Distributing Occupations, Except Postal Workers

(O*NET 43-5011.00, 43-5021.00, 43-5031.00, 43-5032.00, 43-5041.00, 43-5061.00, 43-5071.00, 43-5081.01, 43-5081.02, 43-5081.03, 43-5081.04, 43-5111.00)

Significant Points

- Many of these occupations are entry level and do not require more than a high school diploma.
- Workers develop the necessary skills through on-the-job training lasting from several days to a few months; dispatchers usually require the most extensive training.
- Numerous job openings will arise each year from the need to replace workers who leave this very large occupational group.

Nature of the Work

Workers in this group are responsible for a variety of communications, recordkeeping, and scheduling operations. Typically, they coordinate, expedite, and track orders for personnel, materials, and equipment. *Cargo and freight agents* route and track cargo and freight shipments, whether from airline, train, or truck terminals, or shipping docks. They keep records of any missing or damaged items and any excess supplies. The agents sort cargo according to its destination and separate any items that cannot be packed together. They also coordinate payment schedules with customers and arrange for the pickup or delivery of freight.

Couriers and messengers deliver letters, important business documents, or packages within a firm, to other businesses, or to customers. They usually keep records of deliveries and sometimes obtain the recipient's signature. Couriers and messengers travel by car, van, bicycle, or even by foot when making nearby deliveries.

Dispatchers receive requests for service and initiate action to provide that service. Duties vary, depending on the needs of the employer. Police, fire, and ambulance dispatchers, also called public safety dispatchers, handle calls from people reporting crimes, fires, and medical emergencies. Truck, bus, and train dispatchers schedule and coordinate the movement of these vehicles to ensure that they arrive on schedule. Taxicab dispatchers relay requests for cabs to individual drivers, tow truck dispatchers take calls for emergency road service, and utility company dispatchers handle calls related to utility and telephone service. Courier and messenger service dispatchers route drivers, riders, and walkers around a usually urban area. They distribute work by radio, email, or phone, making sure that service deadlines are met.

Meter readers read meters and record consumption of electricity, gas, water, or steam. They serve a variety of consumers and travel along designated routes to track consumption. Although many meters still are read at the house or building, many newer meters can be read remotely from a central point. Meter readers also look for evidence of unauthorized utility usage.

Production, planning, and expediting clerks coordinate and expedite the flow of information, work, and materials, usually according to a production or work schedule. They gather information for reports on work progress and production problems. They also may schedule workers or parts shipments, estimate costs, and keep inventories of materials.

Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks track all incoming and outgoing shipments of goods transferred between businesses, suppliers, and customers. These clerks may be required to lift cartons of various sizes. Shipping clerks assemble, address, stamp, and ship merchandise or materials. Receiving clerks unpack, verify, and record incoming merchandise. Traffic clerks record the destination, weight, and cost of all incoming and outgoing shipments. In a small company, one clerk may perform all of these tasks.

Stock clerks and order fillers receive, unpack, and store materials and equipment, and maintain and distribute inventories. Inventories may include merchandise in wholesale and retail establishments, or equipment, supplies, or materials in other kinds of organizations. In small firms, stock clerks and order fillers may perform all of the above tasks, as well as those usually handled by shipping and receiving clerks. In large establishments, they may be responsible for only one task.

Weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers check and record the weight and measurement of various materials and equipment. They use scales, measuring and counting devices, and calculators to compare the weight, measurements, or other specifications against bills or invoices. They also prepare reports on inventory levels.

(This introductory section is followed by sections that provide more detail on cargo and freight agents; couriers and messengers; dispatchers; utility meter readers; production, planning, and expediting clerks; shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks; stock clerks and order fillers; and weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers.)

Working Conditions

Working conditions vary considerably by occupation and employment setting. Couriers and messengers spend most of their time alone making deliveries and usually are not closely supervised. Those who deliver by bicycle must be physically fit and are exposed to all weather conditions, as well as to the many hazards associated with heavy traffic. Car, van, and truck couriers must

sometimes carry heavy loads, either manually or with the aid of a handtruck. They also have to deal with difficult parking situations as well as traffic jams and road construction. The pressure of making as many deliveries as possible to increase earnings can be stressful and may lead to unsafe driving or bicycling practices.

Meter readers, usually working 40 hours a week, work outdoors in all types of weather as they travel through communities and neighborhoods taking readings.

The work of dispatchers can be very hectic when many calls come in at the same time. The job of public safety dispatcher is particularly stressful because slow or improper response to a call can result in serious injury or further harm. Also, callers who are anxious or afraid may become excited and be unable to provide needed information; some may even become abusive. Despite provocations, dispatchers must remain calm, objective, and in control of the situation.

Dispatchers sit for long periods, using telephones, computers, and two-way radios. Much of their time is spent at video display terminals, viewing monitors and observing traffic patterns. As a result of working for long stretches with computers and other electronic equipment, dispatchers can experience significant eyestrain and back discomfort. Generally, dispatchers work a 40-hour week; however, rotating shifts and compressed work schedules are common. Alternative work schedules are necessary to accommodate evening, weekend, and holiday work, as well as 24-hour-per-day, 7-day-per-week operations.

Other workers in this group—cargo and freight agents; shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks; stock clerks and order fillers; production, planning, and expediting clerks; and weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers—work in a wide variety of businesses, institutions, and industries. Some work in warehouses, stockrooms, or shipping and receiving rooms that may not be temperature controlled. Others may spend time in cold storage rooms or outside on loading platforms, where they are exposed to the weather.

Production, planning, and expediting clerks work closely with supervisors who must approve production and work schedules. Most jobs for shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks, stock clerks and order fillers, and cargo and freight agents involve frequent standing, bending, walking, and stretching. Some lifting and carrying of smaller items also may be involved. Although automation devices have lessened the physical demands of this occupation, their use remains somewhat limited. Work still can be strenuous, even though mechanical material handling equipment is employed to move heavy items.

The typical workweek is Monday through Friday; however, evening and weekend hours are common for some jobs, such as stock clerks and order fillers in retail trade and couriers and messengers, and may be required in other jobs when large shipments are involved or when inventory is taken.

Employment

In 2000, material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing workers held about 3.5 million jobs. Employment was distributed among the detailed occupations as follows:

Stock clerks and order fillers	1,679,000
Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks	890,000
Production, planning, and expediting clerks	332,000
Dispatchers	254,000
Couriers and messengers	141,000
Weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers, recordkeeping ...	83,000
Cargo and freight agents	60,000
Meter readers, utilities	49,000
All other material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing workers	63,000

About two thirds of material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing jobs were in services or wholesale and retail trade. Although these workers are found throughout the country, most work near population centers where retail stores, warehouses, factories, and large communications centers are concentrated.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Many material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing occupations are entry level and do not require more than a high school diploma. Employers, however, prefer to hire those familiar with computers and other electronic office and business equipment. Those who have taken business courses or have previous business, dispatching, or specific job-related experience may be preferred. Because communication with other people is an integral part of some material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing jobs, good oral and written communications skills are essential. Typing, filing, recordkeeping, and other clerical skills also are important.

State or local government civil service regulations usually govern police, fire, emergency medical, and ambulance dispatching jobs. Candidates for these positions may have to pass written, oral, and performance tests. Also, they may be asked to attend training classes and attain the proper certification in order to qualify for advancement.

Trainees usually develop the necessary skills on the job. This informal training lasts from several days to a few months, depending on the complexity of the job. Dispatchers usually require the most extensive training. Working with an experienced dispatcher, they monitor calls and learn how to operate a variety of communications equipment, including telephones, radios, and various wireless devices. As trainees gain confidence, they begin to handle calls themselves. In smaller operations, dispatchers sometimes act as customer service representatives, processing orders themselves. Many public safety dispatchers also participate in structured training programs sponsored by their employer. Some employers offer a course designed by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials. This course covers topics such as interpersonal communications; overview of the police, fire, and rescue functions; modern public safety telecommunications systems; basic radio broadcasting; local, State, and national crime information computer systems; and telephone complaint/report processing procedures. Other employers develop in-house programs based on their own needs. Emergency medical dispatchers often receive special training or have special skills. Increasingly, public safety dispatchers receive training in stress and crisis management, as well as family counseling. Employers are recognizing the toll this work has on daily living and the potential impact that stress has on the job, on the work environment, and in the home.

Communications skills and the ability to work under pressure are important personal qualities for dispatchers. Residency in the city or county of employment frequently is required for public safety dispatchers. Dispatchers in transportation industries must be able to deal with sudden influxes of shipments and disruptions of shipping schedules caused by bad weather, road construction, or accidents.

Although there are no mandatory licensing or certification requirements, some States require that public safety dispatchers possess a certificate to work on a State network, such as the Police Information Network. The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, the National Academy of Emergency Medical Dispatch, and the International Municipal Signal Association all offer certification programs. Many dispatchers participate in these programs in order to improve their prospects for career advancement.

Couriers and messengers usually learn on the job, training with a veteran for a short time. Those who work as independent contractors for a messenger or delivery service may be required to have a

valid driver's license, a registered and inspected vehicle, a good driving record, and insurance coverage. Many couriers and messengers who are employees, rather than independent contractors, also are required to provide and maintain their own vehicle. Although some companies have spare bicycles or mopeds that their riders may rent for a short period, almost all two-wheeled couriers own their own bicycle, moped, or motorcycle. A good knowledge of the geographic area in which they travel, as well as a good sense of direction, also are important.

Utility meter readers usually shadow a more experienced meter reader until they feel comfortable doing the job on their own. They learn how to read the meters and determine the consumption rate. They also must learn the route that they need to travel in order to read all their customers' meters.

Production, planning, and expediting clerks; weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers; stock clerks and order fillers; and shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks usually learn the job by doing routine tasks under close supervision. They learn how to count and mark stock, and then start keeping records and taking inventory. Strength, stamina, good eyesight, and an ability to work at repetitive tasks, sometimes under pressure, are important characteristics. Production, planning, and expediting clerks must learn how their company operates along with its priorities before they can begin to efficiently write production and work schedules. Stock clerks, whose sole responsibility is to bring merchandise to the sales floor to stock shelves and racks, need little training. Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks and stock clerks and order fillers who handle jewelry, liquor, or drugs may be bonded.

Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks, as well as cargo and freight agents, start out by checking items to be shipped and then attaching labels and making sure the addresses are correct. Training in the use of automated equipment usually is done informally, on the job. As these occupations become more automated, however, workers in these jobs may need longer training in order to master the use of the equipment.

Advancement opportunities for material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing workers vary with the place of employment. Dispatchers who work for private firms, which usually are small, will find few opportunities for advancement. Public safety dispatchers, on the other hand, may become a shift or divisional supervisor or chief of communications, or move to higher paying administrative jobs. Some become police officers or firefighters. Couriers and messengers, especially those who work for messenger or courier services, have limited advancement opportunities; a small fraction move into the office to learn dispatching or to take service requests by phone. In large firms, stock clerks can advance to invoice clerk, stock control clerk, or procurement clerk. Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks are promoted to head clerk, and those with a broad understanding of shipping and receiving may enter a related field such as industrial traffic management. With additional training, some stock clerks and order fillers and shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks advance to jobs as warehouse manager or purchasing agent.

Job Outlook

Overall employment of material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing workers is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2010. In addition, numerous job openings will arise each year from the need to replace workers who leave this very large occupational group.

Projected employment growth varies by detailed occupation. Meter readers will experience a decline in employment due to automated meter reading systems that greatly increase productivity. The use of e-mail and fax will contribute to a decline for couriers and

messengers as well. New technologies will enable stock clerks and order fillers to handle more stock, resulting in slower-than-average employment growth. Employment of shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks and of cargo and freight agents also will grow more slowly than average due to the increasing use of automation that enables these workers to handle materials and shipments more efficiently and more accurately.

Employment of dispatchers; production, planning, and expediting clerks; and weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers is projected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2010. Population growth, in addition to the expanded role of dispatchers stemming from advances in telecommunications, should boost employment levels. Employment of production, planning, and expediting clerks should benefit from more emphasis on efficiency in the production process, while the growing need for accurate inventory records spurs employment of weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers.

Earnings

Earnings of material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing occupations vary somewhat by occupation and industry. The range of median hourly earnings in 2000 are shown in the following tabulation:

Production, planning, and expediting clerks	\$14.71
Cargo and freight agents	13.73
Dispatchers	13.66
Meter readers, utilities	13.32
Weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers, recordkeeping	11.36
Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks	10.52
Couriers and messengers	8.96
Stock clerks and order fillers	8.75
All other material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing workers	11.66

Workers in material recording, scheduling, dispatching, and distributing occupations usually receive the same benefits as most other workers. If uniforms are required, employers usually provide either the uniforms or an allowance to purchase them.

More information on cargo and freight agents; couriers and messengers; dispatchers; meter readers, utilities; production, planning, and expediting clerks; shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks; stock clerks and order fillers; and weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers is available in statements on these occupations that follow this introduction.

Cargo and Freight Agents

(O*NET 43-5011.00)

Nature of the Work

Cargo and freight agents arrange for and track incoming and outgoing cargo and freight shipments in airline, train, or trucking terminals or on shipping docks. They expedite movement of shipments by determining the route that shipments are to take and preparing all necessary shipping documents. The agents take orders from customers and arrange for pickup of freight or cargo for delivery to loading platforms. They may keep records of the properties of the cargo, such as amount, type, weight, and dimensions. They keep a tally of missing items, record conditions of damaged items, and document any excess supplies.

Cargo and freight agents arrange cargo according to its destination. They also determine the shipping rates and other charges that can sometimes apply to the freight. For imported or exported freight,



Cargo and freight agents keep records of the type, weight, and dimensions of cargo shipped.

they verify that the proper customs paperwork is in order. They often track shipments using electronic data, such as bar codes, and answer customer inquiries on the status of their shipments.

Employment

Cargo and freight agents held about 60,000 jobs in 2000. Most jobs were in transportation. About 35 percent of cargo and freight agents worked in transportation services, 23 percent worked for air carriers, and 10 percent worked for local and long distance trucking establishments. Department stores employed 12 percent, while personnel supply services employed 3 percent.

Job Outlook

Employment of cargo and freight agents is expected to grow more slowly than the average for all occupations through 2010. Although cargo traffic is expected to grow faster than it has in the past, employment of cargo and freight agents will not grow as rapidly because of technological advances. For example, the increasing use of bar codes on cargo and freight allows agents and customers to track these shipments quickly over the Internet, rather than manually tracking their location. In addition, customs and insurance paperwork now can be completed over the Internet by customers, reducing the need for cargo and freight agents.

Despite these advances in technology that dampen job growth among cargo and freight agents, job openings will continue to arise due to increases in buying over the Internet, which will result in more